

# **Providing Communication Access for the Consumer with Hearing Loss Information and Resources for Organizations**

This information is focused on assistive listening devices and systems. Please consult the end of the Appendix for information on American Sign Language interpreters and Communication Access Real-time Transliteration (CART).

## **Communication Access is a Civil Right**

Please familiarize yourself with the laws related to communication access.

Visit this link to the **Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing** web site to learn more:  
<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/laws-regs/mcdhh/ada-title-3-public-accommodations.html>

## **U.S Department of Justice ADA Home Page**

<http://www.ada.gov/index.html>

## **Communication Access Is Not One Size Fits All**

The following links provide documents prepared by leaders in the field. They provide definitions and descriptions of options for access:

### **The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Guide**

[http://www.kennedy-center.org/accessibility/guide\\_alds\\_KC.pdf](http://www.kennedy-center.org/accessibility/guide_alds_KC.pdf)

### **Paper Mill Playhouse**

Effective Communication and Program Access

<http://www.arts.gov/resources/accessibility/pubs/DesignAccessibility/Chapter5.pdf>

### **Theatre Development Fund Accessibility Solutions**

[http://www.tdf.org/tdf\\_servicepage.aspx?id=61](http://www.tdf.org/tdf_servicepage.aspx?id=61)

### **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)**

[http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/treatment/assist\\_tech.htm](http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/treatment/assist_tech.htm)

### **Hearing Loss Association of America**

Assistive Technology

<http://www.hearingloss.org/content/technology>

<http://www.hearingloss.org/content/hearing-assistive-technology>

Advocacy

<http://www.hearingloss.org/content/advocacy-people-hearing-loss>

## **How to Make Communication Access Happen**

- Include information about communication access on your website and in all brochures and announcements.
- Post signage indicating what assistive technology is available.
- Keep equipment in good working order.
- Store equipment where it is easy for staff to locate and provide to the consumer, and visible if possible.
- Provide printed material explaining if multiple technologies are available.
- Provide seating arrangements that are compatible to the accommodation provided and any specific needs of the consumer.

## **Developing and Sustaining Communication Access at Your Organization**

- Provide on-going staff training about the available equipment and the different needs for different populations .
- Test equipment regularly .
- Develop a distribution plan which maximizes use of equipment and which guarantees its return .
- Have trained staff onsite during usage hours to assist and respond to consumer needs .
- Prepare for equipment failures and have a backup plan to address the failures immediately.
- Be alert for visual cues from consumer indicating technical problems with the equipment .
- Refund cost of ticket in situations where equipment fails and communication access has not been provided.
- Stay informed regarding changes in technology and changing needs of consumers .
- Consult with experts in assistive technology and communication access . Refer to appendix for links to local experts, equipment/systems providers, Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, local Commissions on Disabilities, Independent Living Centers, and Federal Government links.
- Train staff in communication methods used by consumers to contact and communicate with your organization such as telephone relay calls, how to use an ALD, and other related skills.
- Work with the Communication Access, Training and Technology Services of MCDHH, Mass Relay and other organizations to provide in house communication training. (see appendix)
- Post access symbols with statement about available accommodations on your web page, posters, flyers and other media or advertising.

## **Solicit Feedback**

- Listen to the consumers' experiences. (positive and negative)
- Keep a written log of reported consumer issues.
- When soliciting feedback, keep communication clear and direct.
- If needed, use available options such as pen and paper, or a computer to communicate back and forth .
- Be willing to use an Assistive Listening Device to communicate with the hard of hearing person.

## **Follow Up**

- Access coordinator should ask if patrons using various services are all set when seated.
- Check on how the system is operating during intermission and after the show.
- Staff should be available when the patron returns equipment .
- Provide contact information for follow up if there has been any sort of malfunction .

## **Troubleshooting**

- Check all batteries and rechargeable devices.
- Have spare devices available when a replacement is needed and staff on site to provide them.
- Be sure the consumer fully understands how to use the ALD system.
- Provide visual picture charts on how to use the ALDS, where to sit for ALDS and captioning for optimal experience.
- Involve the users from the community in the production of the explanatory materials because they are the ones that will read it.
- Be sure to make accommodations for seat changes in case the consumer cannot see the captions or hear with the ALDs due to dead spots or interference in the auditorium.
- When the batteries are good, and the staff/technician hears a clear signal, there can still be interference problems for the patron due to components in the hearing aid interface with the ALD. Note the location .
- Due to dead spots in some auditoriums for ALDs, be prepared to change a patron's seat location if necessary .

## Appendix

### Training resources:

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH)

[www.Mass.gov/mcdhh](http://www.mass.gov/mcdhh)

Communication Access, Training and Technology Services (CATTS)

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/services-by-type/deaf-hh/communicate-train/>

CATTS Training Request Form

[www.mass.gov/mcdhh/training](http://www.mass.gov/mcdhh/training)

MassRelay

<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/massrelay/>

### Vendors

Terry Hanley Audio Systems

<http://www.terryhanleyaudio.com/>

Hartling Communication

<http://www.hearitbetter.com/channels/home/2005/1116853906/index.shtm>

Media Access Group at WGBH

<http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/pages/mag/about/>

More:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/services-by-type/deaf-hh/hearing-dogs/vendor-literature/>

### Signage

Harris Communication

<http://www.harriscomm.com/catalog/default.php?cPath=51>

[http://www.harriscomm.com/catalog/product\\_info.php?cPath=51&products\\_id=17795](http://www.harriscomm.com/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=51&products_id=17795)

Graphics for all the disability symbols:

<http://www.graphicartistsguild.org/resources/disability-access-symbols/>

Most businesses that manufacture signage have the inventory or the capacity to produce the signage needed for access symbols. You can check with the local businesses.



TTY



Assistive  
Listening  
Systems



Closed  
Captioning



Open  
Captioning



FM Systems Available  
Infrared Receivers Available



### Municipal Resources

The Massachusetts Office on Disabilities maintains a list of Municipal ADA Coordinators. You can contact the ADA Coordinator or the city hall to determine if the town has a Commission on Disabilities to assist with access issues.

<http://www.mass.gov/anf/employment-equal-access-disability/oversight-agencies/mod/mod-publications.html>

### CART and American Sign Language Interpreters:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/services-by-type/deaf-hh/cart/>

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